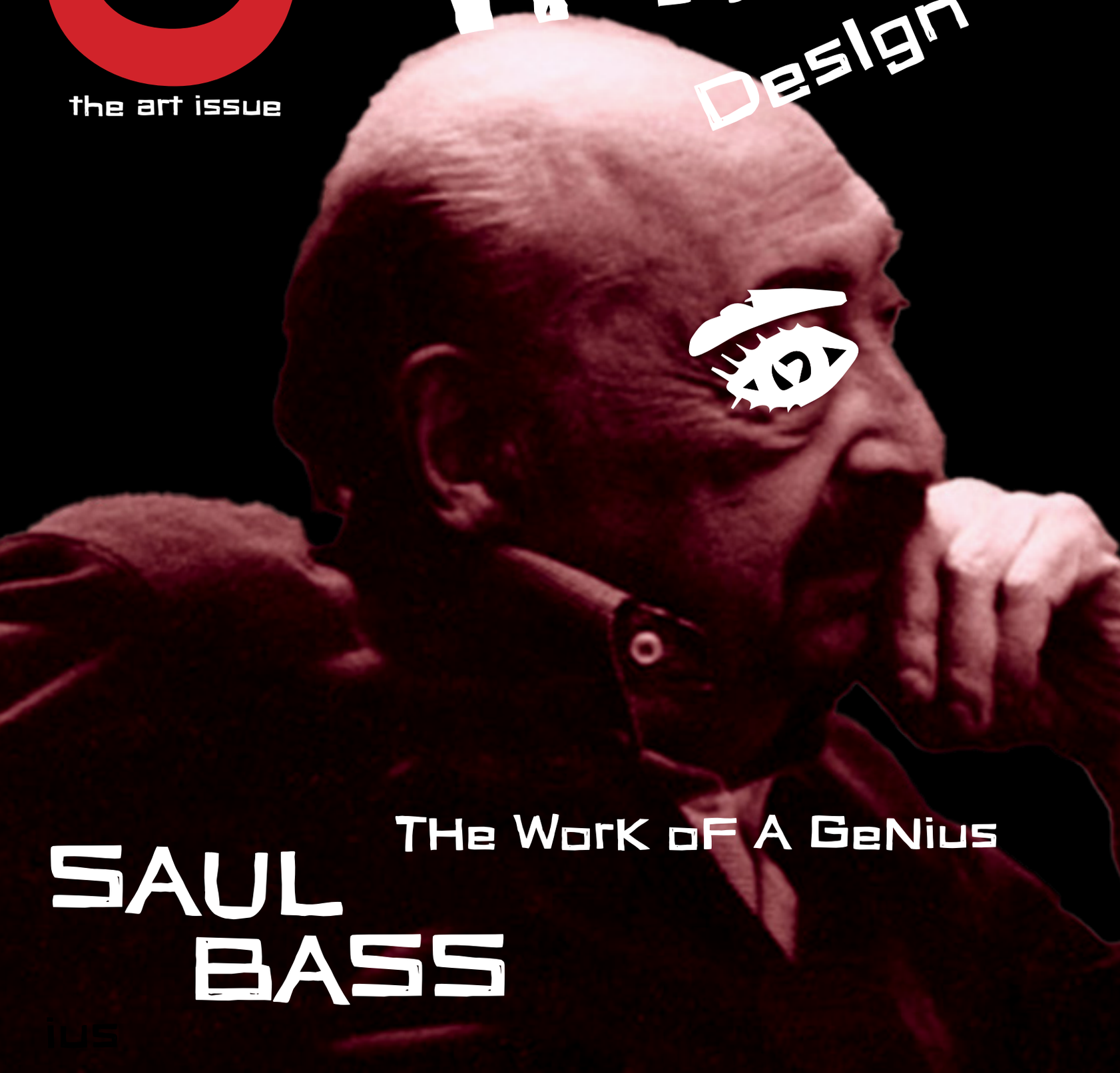
GRAPHIC DESIGNER / KACPER KUPCZYK

i-D

the art issue

A Life in Film & Design



THe WorK oF A GeNius

SAUL BASS

ius

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LEADER

It's safe to say that Saul Bass revolutionised the way that films are marketed and presented to the public. More than just a graphic designer, he created the visual identity for some of Hollywood's most iconic films of the 1950s and 1960s, producing not only movie posters but often the opening title sequences too.

"My initial thoughts about what a title can do was to set mood and the prime underlying core of the film's story, to express the story in some metaphorical way. I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it." - Saul Bass

As an American graphic designer and Oscar-Winning Filmmakerm, Bass is still a huge inspiration to other designer from his era and the modern era too.

His simplistic graphic style is something that modernised the industry and you can still see bits of his work here and there. That is the influence Saul Bass had on the world of film and graphic design.

IKEA

MAKE A MOVIE

How m

THE UNSUNG HERO WHO WORKED WITH SAUL BASS

By: Olympia W. Crawford

How many famous graphic designers can you name?

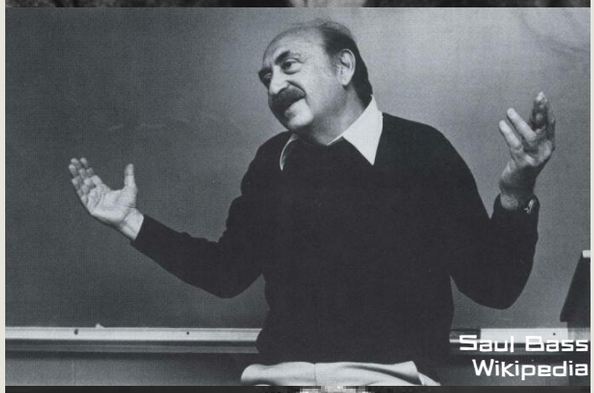
For 50 years until his death in 1997, Saul Bass, born in the Bronx, New York, on 8 May 100 years ago, crafted company logos, advertising campaigns, album covers, product packages, to such prolific and celebrated effect that somewhere along the line, he became known as "the Picasso of commercial artists". Which at once sounds overblown and doesn't quite do him justice. It's as the reinventor of the film poster and, most significantly, the master – and effectively creator – of the movie title sequence that he is most revered. You can spot a Bass poster from a mile away, despite the legion of imitators who still try (and fail) to replicate the modernist style he had honed via a childhood obsession with drawing, a transformative period learning from his mentor Gyorgy Kepes in his twenties ("he really just set me on fire... it would take me hours to settle down after each class"), and later through branding work on Madison Avenue. To see the imitations is to understand just how good he was. His use of colour, typography and negative space was daring in the Fifties. Combined with his clear ideas and bold symbols – the fat black teardrop for Bonjour Tristesse, the segmented corpse for Anatomy of a Murder – Bass's work was to graphic design what Charlie Parker's was, in the same period, to jazz. It was revolutionary.

A harder question than it should be, but if you like films, you should at least know one.

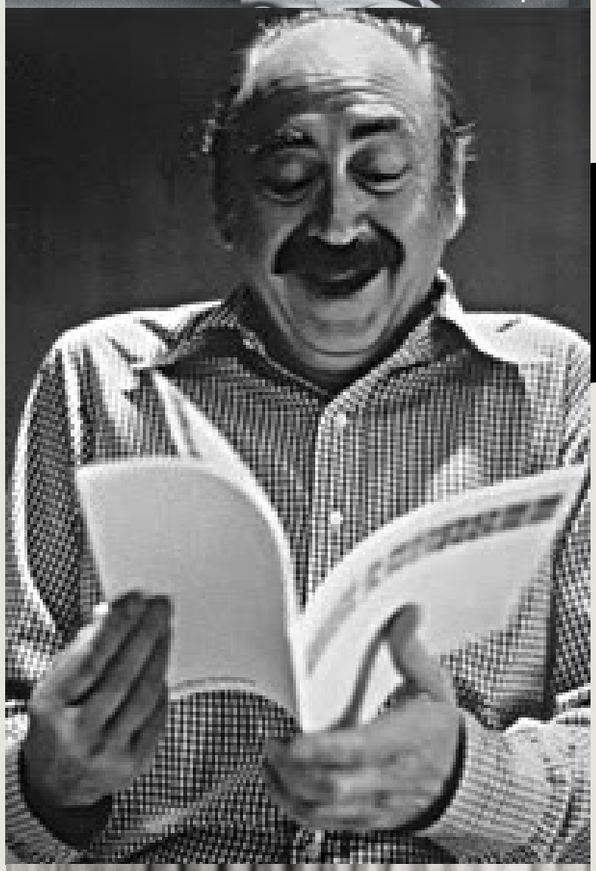
The art of the sequence

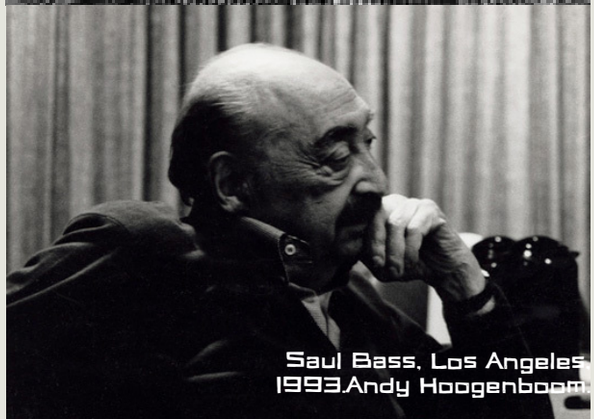
SAUL BASS That was the posters. His influence on the title sequence was seminal. Before Bass, the title sequence hardly existed; a series of names against a static image while the audience chat- ted. Often projectionists wouldn't bother to open the curtains until after the credits had rolled. Bass believed films should begin with the very first frame and that titles were not only a means to transport the audience from the real world to that of the film but an "overture" which set the mood and foreshadowed the story itself: its tone, themes and even ambiguous clues to how the film might be read. As he honed his craft, working with directors including Billy Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock and Otto Preminger, and later John Franken- heimer, Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese, these sequences became short movies in their own right; in some instances more clever, creative, dramatic and witty than the features that followed. For Scorsese, Bass "took us into the modern-day sensibility," calling him a "giant" in the foreword to the impressive 2011 tome Saul Bass: A ife in Film and DEsign by Pat Kirkham and Bass's daughter Jennifer Bass. It's a sensibility we now take for granted, especially in prestige television where the sequences before big shows have become competitive calling cards: from the falling man in Mad Men, to the android workshop in Westworld. Whatever you've just been watching, or are just about to, most of it can be traced back to 1955 and director Otto Preminger's The Man with The Golden Arm It was Preminger, whose interchangeable nicknames "the Ogre" and "the Terrible" don't suggest an easy man to work with, who took a chance on Bass, at that time part of the modernist scene in Los Angeles alongside Man Ray, Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann, Ray and Charles Eames. He offered Bass the opportunity to change cinematic design that he had craved.

Photography of Saul Bass. California Film Institute.



Saul Bass Wikipedia



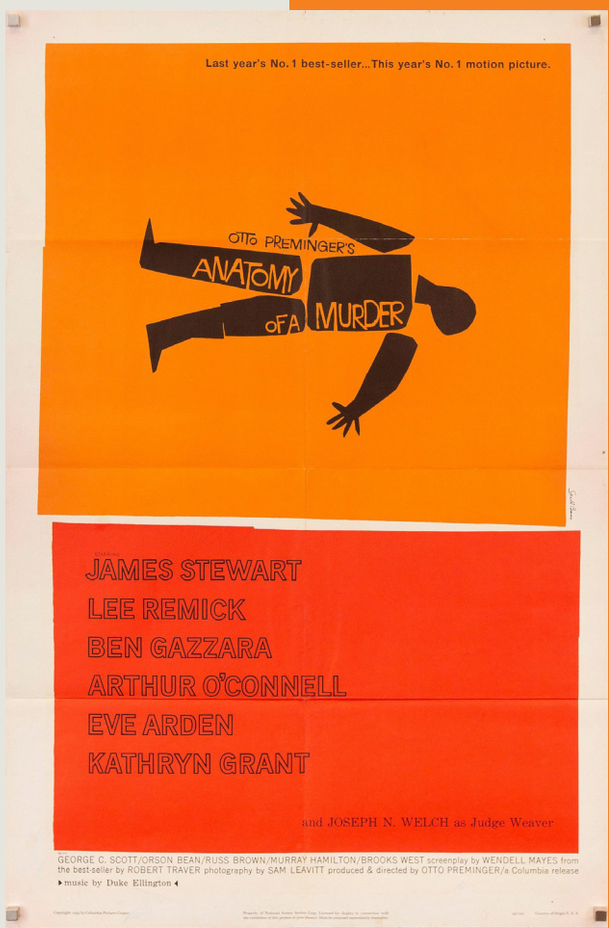


Saul Bass, Los Angeles 1993.Andy Hoogenboom

THE GOLDEN ARM was the second of 13 films Preminger and Bass worked on together. It starred Frank Sinatra as Frankie Machine, a card dealer, drummer and heroin addict. For the poster, Bass's use of a jagged, disembodied arm was both a memorable way to brand the film and a smart way of communicating more than the censors would allow. But it was the opening titles – white lines appearing at increasingly crazy angles on a black background, finally resolving into the sinister shape of a reaching arm – combined with Elmer Bernstein's increasingly frenetic jazz score that elevated titles to art for the first time. Preminger instructed projectionists to open the curtains before playing the titles. "The Man with the Golden Arm woke everybody up," said Kyle Cooper, designer of over 60 title sequences including Seven and Minority Report. Martin Scorsese remembers sneaking into the cinema to watch it as a 13-year-old and spent the following weeks sketching out his own versions.

1995

"Saul Bass was the person everyone in the office admired," said Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, at the time a young graphic designer and jazz obsessive who went to hear the Bernstein score. "We all aspired to that beautiful simplification. Then came Anatomy of a Murder. After that he was God." By 1958, Bass was the most famous graphic designer in the world and over the next five years hit a streak of opening titles that might be described as peak Bass – North by Northwest, Ocean's Eleven, Psycho, Spartacus, Exodus, Something Wild, It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World. By this time he was offering studios a package that included main and credit titles, trademark, TV trailer, screen trailer, posters, trade ads, newspaper ads, album cover and subway card.

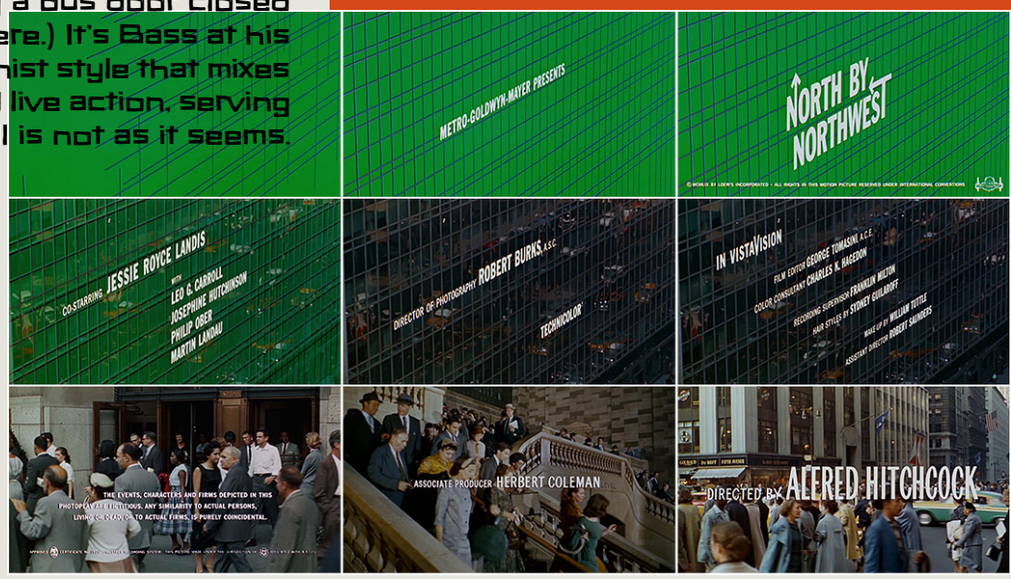


EMI Group Limited-Capitol Records. Courtesy Saul Bass Estate

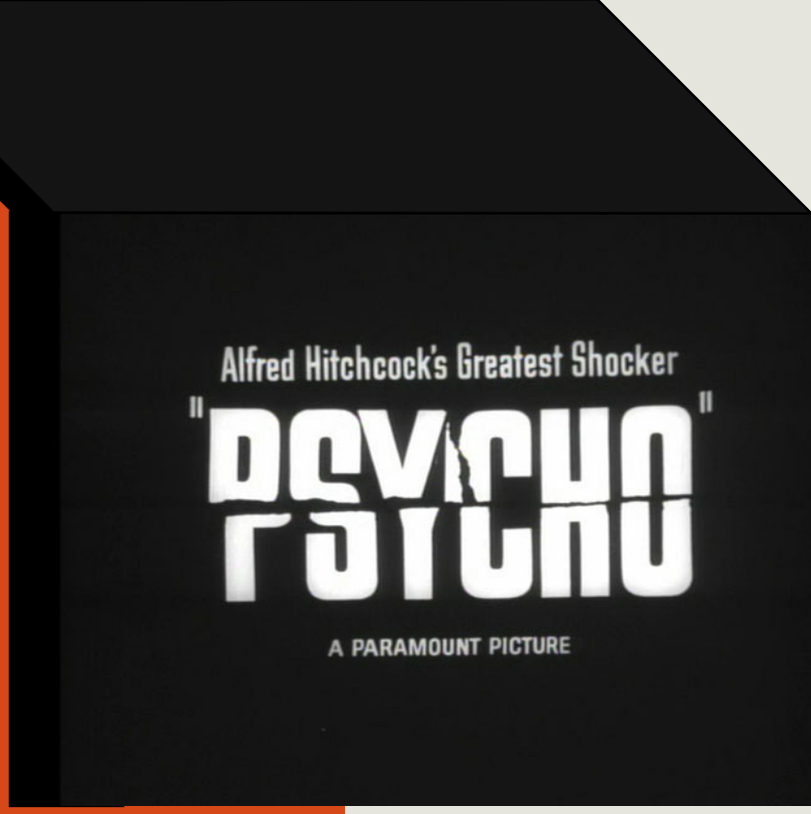
Saul Bass, Vertigo, poster, 1958. Wikipedia.

Perhaps the most disturbing and compelling of all his titles were those he made for Hitchcock's Vertigo, now regularly voted by critics among the greatest films ever made. Bass opens on a close-up of Kim Novak's face, panning to her eye – to Bass the most vulnerable part of a human body – and zooming inside, where swirling forms relayed both the vertigo of the title and the obsession at the film's centre.

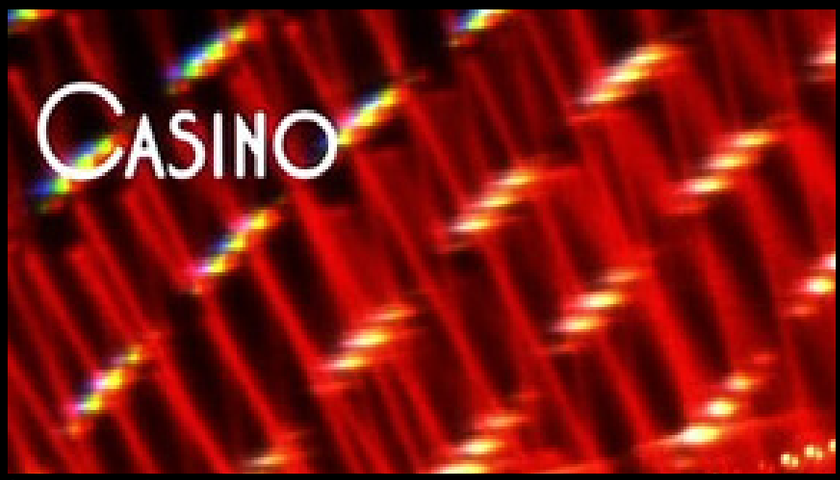
Next up for Hitchcock, the brilliant green, graphical grid of the North by Northwest titles – credited as being the first sequence to use kinetic type – becomes the windows of a skyscraper, before hitting the streets of New York in rush hour, closing on a shot of Hitchcock himself having a bus door closed on him. (We've all been there.) It's Bass at his very best, a purely modernist style that mixes graphics, typography and live action, serving as a perfect tease that all is not as it seems.



With **PSYCHO**, Bass's status had risen to such an extent that Hitchcock deployed him as a well-remunerated "visual consultant", bringing him in before writing began and sending him chunks of the screenplay as they were written. As well as the titles, which featured words jumbling and frazzling in the manner of a mentally unstable mind – yet another killer idea, expertly executed – Bass's role included specific responsibility for scarifying the house on the hill, mapping out the murder of the detective and conceptualising the pivotal shower scene in which Janet Leigh's character is murdered. (No apologies for the spoiler, you've had 60 years to watch it.) It's hard to believe that Alfred Hitchcock, the notoriously autocratic auteur (though according to Bass a benevolent one), ceded creative control to someone else for



probably the most famous scene in his entire directorial oeuvre. He even allowed Bass to take control of the scene on set, permitting the designer to announce, "Roll camera... action". You only have to rewatch the film's shower scene with this in mind to see Bass's graphic influence: the stylised fast cutting and abstract framing were pure Bass and very un-Hitchcock. After this film, the pair never worked together again and it's thought Hitchcock's reluctance to give Bass credit disappointed the designer, understandably so. "Psycho, Vertigo and North by Northwest are all impossible to disassociate from the title sequences that he designed," director Edgar Wright tells Esquire.



By the late Sixties, the Bass title machine was winding down. After Grand Prix in 1966 – an amazing live action prologue using car details to depict the minutes before a race – they would become fewer and further between. Titles had by now become an industry or, for Bass, a showy "tap dance" that didn't always serve the film. "We saw a lot of pyrotechnics and fun and games and I suppose we lost interest," Bass, who had been collaborating with his future wife Elaine since Spartacus in 1960, would later reflect. "At the same time, an increasing number of directors now sought to open their own films in ambitious ways rather than hire someone else to do it. Whatever the reasons, the result was 'Fade Out'. We did not worry about it: we had too many other interesting projects to get on with."

In 1974, Bass became a feature director for the one and only time, when Paramount asked him to direct Phase IV, in Bass's words, a "sort of sci-fi, surrealistic, ecological suspense story" pitting man against an increasingly intelligent and aggressive desert ant population. On paper, not the most obvious Bass project, it suffered from a B-movie script and some odd studio decisions – most conspicuously not allowing Bass any control over the film's posters or ad campaign but showed plenty of Bass's creative eye and has since attracted a new following, including Edgar Wright: "As bonkers as the final film is, it seems Saul's original version of Phase IV was even weirder, as the original ending has surfaced through his family. I dream of seeing the entire film restored very soon." From here on, he focused largely on corporate identity work, designing and redesigning logos for Quaker Oats, Warner Bros and United Airlines, and seeing it as no less worthy. For Bass, now sporting a bushy moustache, it was another challenge, and

This article was originally published by Will Hersey

one that played back to his core principles. "Trademarks are usually metaphors of one kind or another. And are, in a certain sense, thinking made visible," he said. His corporate work has been included in the permanent collections of both the Museum of Modern Art and the Smithsonian Institution. But he wasn't quite done with film. In 1989, Martin Scorsese was having trouble with the credits on Goodfellas when he saw the Basses credited on the Tom Hanks film Big: "My God, this is great! They are working." Were they interested? "Were we interested in doing titles for Martin Scorsese? You bet your ass we were," was Bass's response. This content is imported from YouTube. You may be able to find the same content in another format, or you may be able to find more information, at their web site. Their simple typographic treatment with credits passing across the screen like moving cars, hit the brief precisely. Before the murder in the trunk that is the film's famous first scene, the type is white. After the murder, the type is red. "You write a book of 300 to 400 pages and then you boil it down to a script of maybe 100 to 150 pages. Eventually, you have the pleasure of seeing that the Basses have knocked you right out of the ballpark. They have boiled it down to four minutes flat," said the Wiseguy author and Goodfellas co-scriptwriter Nicholas Pileggi. Casino, in 1995, would be the couple's last and, fittingly, one of their best. The sequence begins just before De Niro's character starts his car, so triggering a bomb and sending his silhouette soaring through hellish Las Vegas-inspired backdrops in slow motion. Bass died two years later, aged 77. He'd finished with a bang. "I want to make beautiful things," Bass once said. "Even if nobody cares. That's my input." But they did care. And a century after his birth, they still do.

NYHET!

I WANNA YUZU
PEACH DON'T KILL MY VIBE
MERRY BERRY

SOMMERENS BESTE FORFRISKNING!

KOMMER NÅ I TRE NYE SMAKER!

NYHET!

SPISELIGE BLOMSTER!

FLORIS

I scream for ice cream!

THIS IS SAUL BASS

TITLE

EARLY LIFE Saul Bass was born in May 8, 1920 in New York City. He studied at the Art Student's League in Manhattan until attending classes with Gyorgy Kepes at Brooklyn College. He began his time in Hollywood doing print work for film ads, until he collaborated with filmmaker Otto Preminger to design the movie poster for his 1954 film Carmen Jones. Preminger was so impressed with Bass's work that he asked him to produce the title sequence as well. This was when Bass first saw the opportunity to create something more than a title sequence, but to create something which would ultimately enhance the experience of the audience and tell the beginning of the story within the opening credits. Bass was one of the first to realize upon the storytelling potential of the opening and closing credits of a film. **MOVIE TITLE SEQUENCES** Bass became notorious in the industry after creating the title sequence for Otto Preminger's The Man with the Golden Arm (1955). The subject of the film was a jazz musician's struggle to overcome his heroin addiction, a taboo subject in the mid 50's. Bass decided to create a controversial title sequence. He chose the arm as the central image, as the arm is a strong image relating to drug addiction. The titles featured an animated, black paper cut-out arm of a heroin addict. As he expected, it caused quite a sensation. For Alfred Hitchcock, Bass provided effective, memorable title sequences for North by Northwest, Vertigo, and Psycho. Bass famously claimed that he directed the highlight of Psycho, the tightly edited shower-murder sequence, though many on set at the time (including Janet Leigh) dispute this contention. It was this kind of innovative, revolutionary work that made Bass the revered graphic designer he is today. His later work with Martin Scorsese saw him move away from the optical techniques that he had pioneered and move into computerised titles, from which he produced the stunning sequence for Casino. He had been designing title sequences for 40 years before his death in 1996, from films as diverse as It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World (1963) to Casino (1995). He also designed title sequences for films such as Goodfellas (1990), Doc Hollywood (1991), Cape Fear (1991) and The Age of Innocence (1993), all of which feature new and innovative methods of production and startling graphic design, and all of which attempt to tell some of the story, be it introducing characters or giving plot clues, in the first few minutes of the film. He also designed the Student Academy Award for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In 1974, Bass made his only film as a director, the visually splendid science fiction film Phase IV.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where did Saul Bass study? Brooklyn College. He attended night classes with a famous Hungarian-born designer, Gy rgy Kepes. Upon completion of his studies, he worked as a freelancer for several advertising companies and agencies, including the illustrious Warner Bros. He moved to Los Angeles, where he pursued graphic designing as a commercial artist. During 1940's he took up some Hollywood projects, which involved the print work for promotional purposes. In fact, he started up his own practice in 1952 and a few years later established his private firm as Saul Bass & Associates. Which motion picture helped launch Saul Bass' film career? In 1954, Bass finally had his big break as he was offered a job by the filmmaker Otto Preminger to design a poster for Carmen Jones. His work left a remarkable impression on Preminger, who availed his expertise yet again for his film's title sequence. With the opportunity, came the realization that the title sequence can not only be served as mere static credits but it can enhance the watching experience of the audience. Bass realized the potential of title sequence if incorporated with the right audio and visual sequence can help set the mood and theme at the opening of a film. What is Saul Bass' style? Bass is famous for his use of simple, geometric shapes and symbolism. Often, a single dominant image stands alone to deliver a powerful message. These shapes, as well as type, were often hand-drawn by Bass to create a casual appearance, always packed with a sophisticated message.

QUESTIONS

His ability to create such a powerful message with basic shapes makes the work even more impressive. What is Saul Bass best known for? Bass was an American graphic designer and Academy Award-winning filmmaker, best known for his design of motion-picture title sequences, film posters, and corporate logos. Bass developed iconic, influential and noteworthy title sequences employing distinguished kinetic typography for motion pictures, including The Man with the Golden Arm (1955), North by Northwest (1959), Vertigo (1958) and Psycho (1960).

Q&A

WHAT WAS SAUL BASS'S LAST PROJECT/WORK?

WHAT IS SAUL BASS BEST KNOWN FOR?

WHERE DID SAUL BASS STUDY?

FEBRUARY 2023

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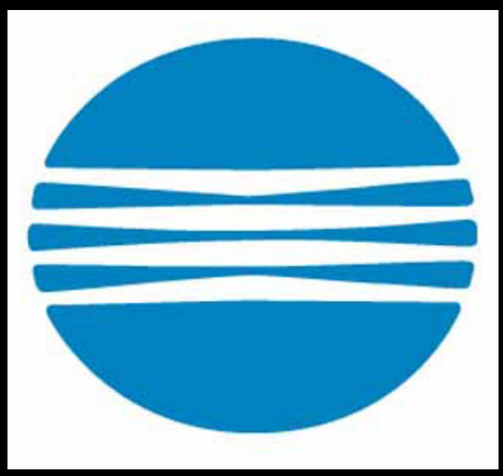
THE SAUL



"I saw the title as a way of conditioning the audience, so that when the film actually began, viewers would already have an emotional resonance with it." (Haskins, Pamela "Saul, Can You Make Me a Title? Interview with Saul Bass". Film Quarterly Autumn 1996 pp. 12-13.) A visionary credited with changing film title sequences forever, Saul Bass trained as a graphic designer, hailing from the east coast before making the move to the heart of the film industry in Hollywood, and making California his home.

During his groundbreaking 40 year career, Bass worked for directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick on legendary films including Psycho and Spartacus, and later, Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

Bass was instrumental in realising the creative potential of title sequences and credits to help introduce the story and set the scene of the film, cleverly expressing the visual style of the movie with a graphic understanding.

BASS ARCHIVE

Contemporary designers have continued to be inspired by his legacy and pay homage to his work, as seen in examples such as the opening to the television series Mad Men.

Bass followed up his extraordinary film career with a return to his graphic designer roots and the creation of seriously iconic corporate logos for clients such as United Airlines and Minolta, still in use today.

And one cannot look at the life and work of Bass without also remarking on the talent of his life and working partner, collaborator and wife, Elaine.

Inspired by A Handbook of California Design, 1930-1965 - Craftspeople, Designers, Manufacturers, edited by Bobbye Tigerman. Los Angeles County Museum of Art 2013 credit: Wikipedia, theartofthetitle.com, Section D: On Design episode 23 by Ben Rylan on Monocle radio title quote credit; Kirkham, Pat & Jennifer Bass (2011) Saul Bass: A Life in Film & Design. London: Laurence King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A MAGAZINE MADE TO SHOWCASE SAUL BASS 's WORK AND ART

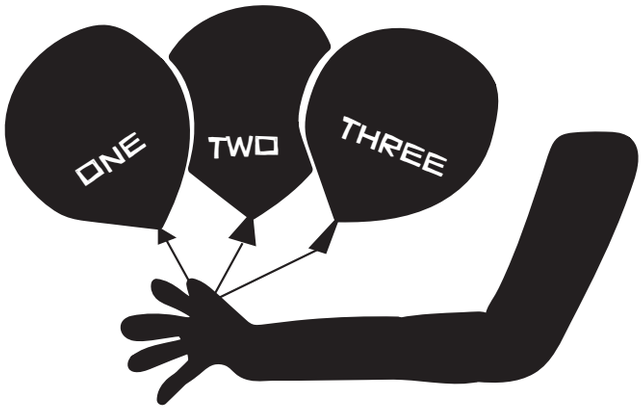
THE MAN WHO CHANGED GRAPHIC DESIGN

Bass' designs for Bell (1969), Kleenex (1980s) and AT&T (1986) Logo design is not all Bass is known for. In fact, logos form the lesserpart of Bass' artistic legacy. Read on for a look at one of the most illustrious graphic design careers to date. Getting his start Bass was born in 1920 in New York City, to Jewish immigrants. A creative child, he drew constantly. For college, he attended night classes at the Art Students League where he had the fortune of studying under Gyorgy Kepes, a master of the functional Bauhaus aesthetic. Graphic design in film In the 1940s, Bass left New York for California. He worked mostly for advertising until his first major break: a poster for the 1954 film, Carmen Jones. The filmmakers were so impressed by his poster work, they invited him to design the title credits as well. This turned out to be a game changing decision.

Bass' poster designs for Anatomy of a Murder (1959) and Love in the Afternoon (1957)

Bass's poster designs for Anathomy of a Murder (1959) and Love in the Afternoon (1957)

Bass' designs for Bell (1969), Kleenex (1980s) and AT&T (1986)



Bass' designs for Kos Cosmetics (1959), Kibun (1964) and Warner Communications (1972)

Bass' poster designs for The Man with the Golden Arm (1955) and Vertigo (1958)

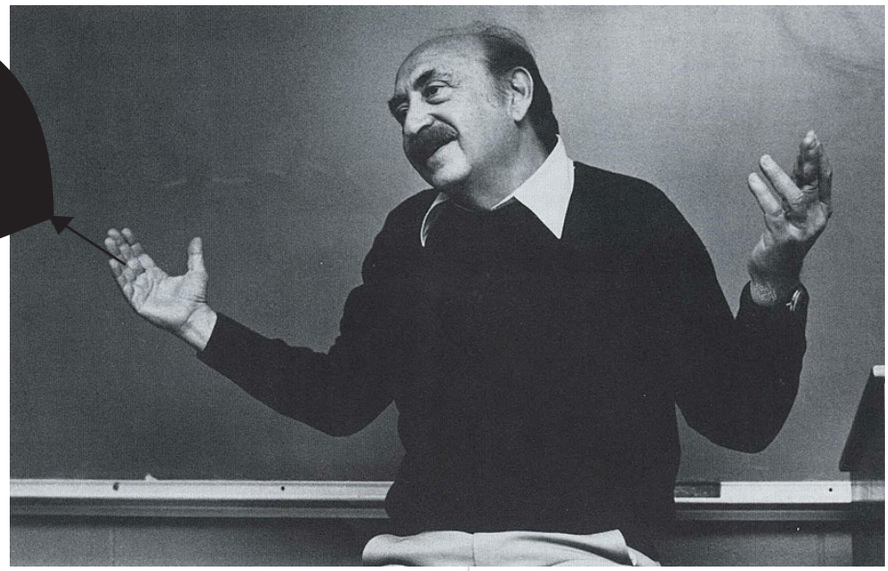
Bass' poster designs for The Man with the Golden Arm (1955) and Vertigo (1958) Bass stepped up the sophistication of movie posters with his distinctive minimal style and he completely revolutionized the role of title credits in films. Traditionally, credits were static and drab. They were considered so unimportant, they would actually be projected onto the closed curtains which would only open for the first official scene of the movie. Bass, however, was committed to injecting life into these graphics, making them as much a part of the cinematic experience as anything else. Introducing his signature "kinetic type," Bass' letters dashed and moved across the screen and frequently incorporated images other than text. Titles became a spectacle to be seen. Film reels with Bass credits were delivered to movie theaters along with a note: "projectionist – pull curtain before titles." Bass' famed title credits

for North By Northwest (1959) Bass went on to create dozens of iconic film posters and title credits. His final projects before his death in 1996 were credits for four Martin Scorsese films: Goodfellas (1990), Cape Fear (1991), The Age of Innocence (1993) and Casino (1995). Bass' title credits for Goodfellas (1990) Logos made to last The average lifespan of a Saul Bass logo is a whopping 34 years. Some of his work have yet to be replaced, like the absolutely brilliant designs for Kos Cosmetics (1959), Kibun (1964), Warner Communications (1972), Girl Scouts (1978, with a slight modification made in 2010) and Geffen Records (1980). With designs as solid, thoughtful and timeless as these, they might never have to be.

(From left) Bass' designs for Kos Cosmetics (1959), Kibun (1964) and Warner Communications (1972)

Saul Bass' original 1978 Girl Scouts logo and the 2010 variation, redesigned by OCD Agency

Saul Bass's (Girl Scouts) logo on left (2010) by OCD Agency



Bass's logo for Geffen Records (1980), William Haig, Saul Bass

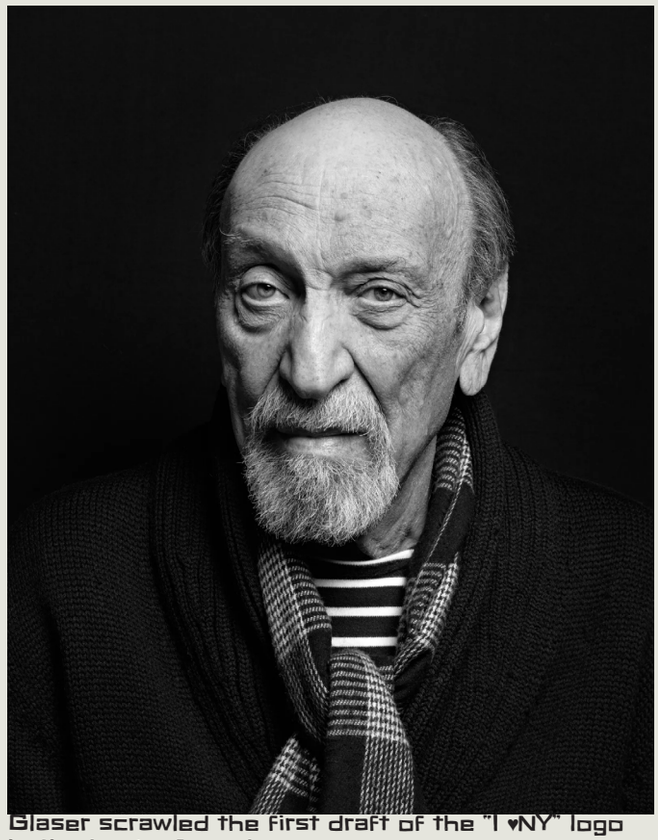
Bass' logo for Geffen Records (1980) Logo designer William Haig recalls working with Bass on the Continental Airlines logo – the first of what Haig calls "credibility based logo design": I came back with 1500 slides. Saul and I were in a late night meeting discussing what the Continental look meant and what inference we could make for a new Continental logo design as the beginning of a new image program. I remember Saul saying something like, "If this were Western Airlines, we would just make a 'western' looking logo complete with an 'out west look' reminiscent of cowboy gear." But this was Continental, an airline known at the time for its high service image.

Saul Bass' famed "jetstream" logo for Continental Airlines (1968) This particular logo was ultimately replaced in 1991 but, as with all of Bass' creations, the distinctive look of the original will live on in graphic design history.

Saul Bass's (jetstream) logo, Continental Airlines (1968)

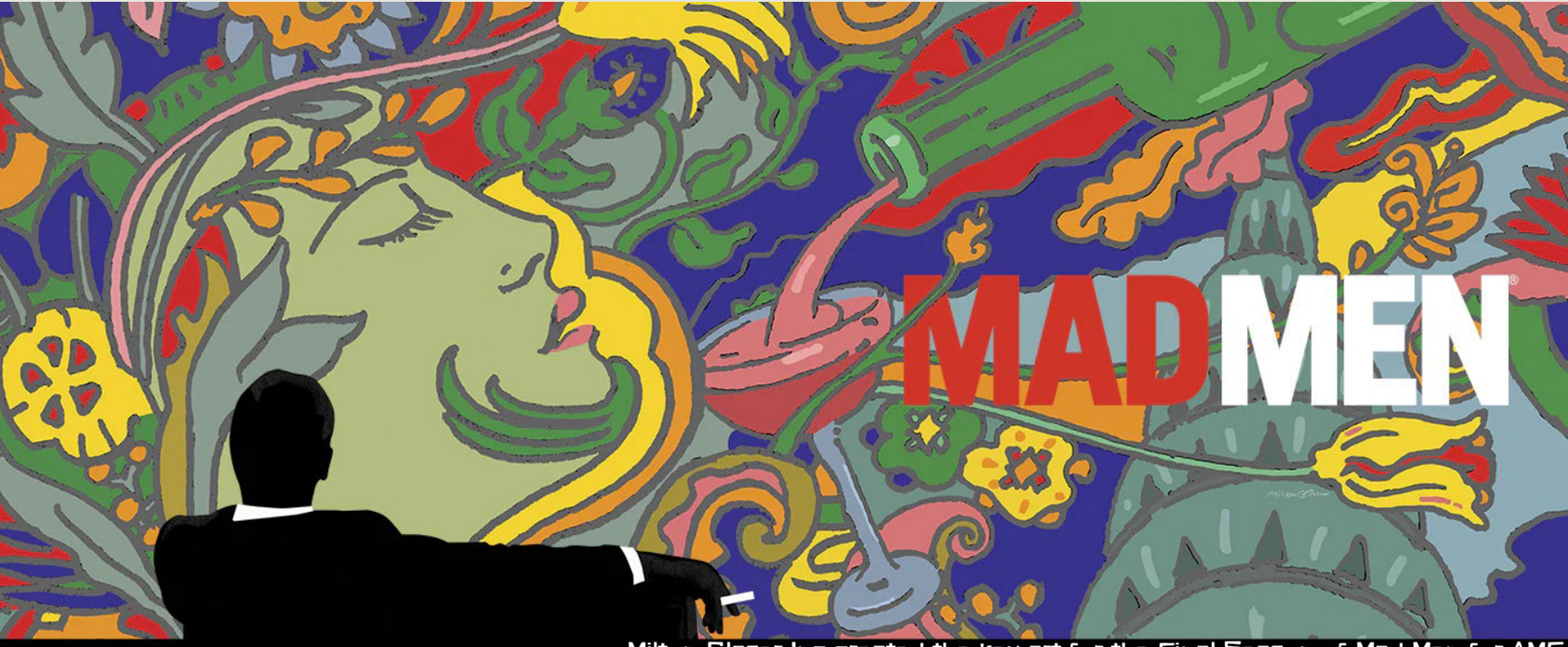
MILTON GLASER MADE YOU THINK TWICE

Glaser scrawled the first draft of the "I ♥NY" logo in the back of a cab. Photograph by Axel Dupeux / Redux The greatest artistic fame might be the kind where few people know your name but everyone knows your work, because it feels as inevitable to the everyday culture as fire or the wheel. The fact that one person had to invent it from nothing gets forgotten, or overlooked, as the work becomes part of our shared visual lexicon. There aren't many artists who get to see such a process happen during their lifetime, but Milton Glaser, the polymathic graphic designer, illustrator, and artist, who died last week, at the age of ninety-one, did. During the past several decades, anyone walking down Canal Street couldn't have missed the sidewalk stalls stuffed with products bearing his "I ♥NY" design: counterfeit T-shirts, onesies, hoodies, license plates, anything, really, emblazoned with the three slightly lopsided letters and the bright-red heart. Especially after 9/11, when it was embraced as a hopeful message, the logo was not just fodder for tourists but an omnipresent symbol for the city itself, as familiar and iconic as the Empire State Building. Glaser scrawled the first draft of the logo in the back of a cab, in 1976, red ink on a scrap of envelope; the sketch is now, fittingly, in the possession of the Museum of Modern Art. He made it for a marketing campaign for New York State, in 1977, which was a tricky moment for the city in particular—it didn't seem very lovable. In the final design, the typeface is American Typewriter, friendly and approachable, with a cartoonish cast (notice the rounded bent knee of the "N") that was Glaser's signature, as if he anticipated the logo's ascendance as kitsch. Its stacked format recalls the artist Robert Indiana's 1966 LOVE screenprint; Glaser admitted that he may have been "subliminally" inspired, but why quibble over ownership or originality? Both creations are endlessly remixed memes, gifts from the artists to the rest of civilization. Glaser knew New York City. He was born in the Bronx in 1929,



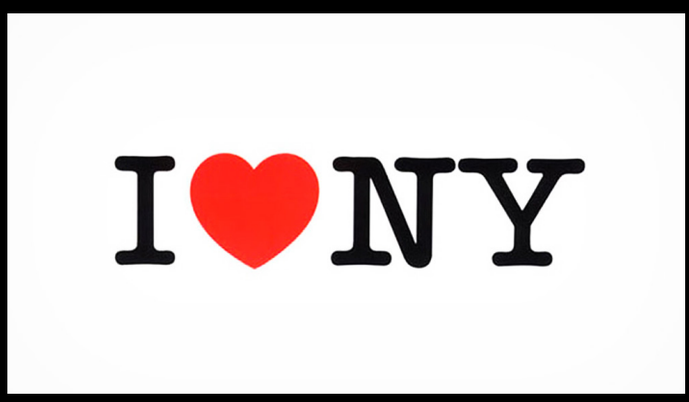
Glaser scrawled the first draft of the "I ♥NY" logo in the back of a cab.
Photograph by Axel Dupeux / Redux

the son of Hungarian-Jewish immigrants, attended Manhattan's High School of Music & Art, and landed downtown at Cooper Union, a university that emphasizes both technical mastery and unorthodox creative leaps, a very Glaserian combination. After college, he studied in Italy with the painter Giorgio Morandi, an ascetic craftsman of still-lifes. Glaser made his reputation with Push Pin Studios, a design agency that he started in 1954, with his Cooper Union classmates Reynold Ruffins, Seymour Chwast, and Edward Sorel. Push Pin began putting out a monthly publication called Push Pin Graphic, partly to advertise the agency's services, but it quickly became influential in its own right. The early issues are full of typographic experiments and Surrealist illustrations, leaning



Milton Glaser Inc created the key art for the Final Season of Mad Men for AMC.

more toward the sketchy strokes of Paul Klee than the clean-lined modernism of the time. Glaser's work combined a deep, intimate poster of Bob Dylan mingles an obscure Marcel Duchamp reference–Duchamp made similar silhouettes of his own profile from cut paper–with the colors and patterns of Islamic painting, in Dylan's psychedelic wave of hair. Yet pure artistry was never Glaser's primary purpose; graphic design's job was to communicate. "The professional requirement to succeed demands that the work be both understandable and motivating to its target audience," Glaser wrote, in his book "In Search of the Miraculous," published in 2012. Throughout his work, he exhibited a drive to connect with viewers and reach them wherever they were. In 1968, Glaser and the editor Clay Felker co-founded New York. It's hard to think of a better vehicle for communication than a magazine, and Glaser's dynamic layouts and electric illustrations created meaning as much as the writings they accompanied (to which he also contributed). His covers for the magazine addressed drugs, gossip, sex, summer, and food, often in cartoonish but unsentimental drawings, like Old Master etchings for the twentieth century. His interest in the exaggerated and grotesque reminds me of the later paintings of Philip Guston, another artist who approached earthly detritus with a classical sensibility.



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